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Sexual Behavior and Substance Use During Incarceration



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Background

- Approximately two million people are incarcerated in the United States.
- Many people in correctional facilities have a history of high-risk sexual behaviors and substance abuse.
- Incarcerated persons have higher rates of HIV/STDs than the general US population.
- Few studies have examined sexual behavior and drug use during incarceration.
- It is unclear whether the increased burden of infections is driven by behaviors that occur during incarceration.

Objectives

- To examine the frequency and correlates of inprison substance use and sexual behavior reported by a cohort of young men with a history of incarceration.

Methods

- Young men (18-29) released from prisons in 3 US States (MS, RI, and WI) were enrolled into a retrospective study assessing risk behavior during incarceration.
- This behavioral assessment was part of a larger multi-site intervention research trial (Project START). Men who completed intervention activities and were not incarcerated at time of interview, completed an ACASI interview that assessed risk behavior during any previous incarceration.
- The ACASI instrument included:
 - Awareness of behaviors
 - “Did you ever see inmates inject drugs or steroids?”
 - “Were you aware of inmates having sex with inmates?”
 - Personal behaviors
 - “Did you ever use drugs?”
 - “How often did you use drugs?”
 - “How many men did you have sex with during the X times you were incarcerated?”
- Univariate associations were entered into two separate logistic regression analyses to test the hypotheses that variables were independently associated with alcohol or drug use (model 1), or consensual sex (model 2) during incarceration.

Results

Enrollment and Participant Characteristics in the Community:

- 197 of 210 eligible men participated (M age=22 years, SD=2.6) (see Table 1).
- The median length of incarceration since age 18 was 29 months.
- 9% reported injection drug use (IDU) and 5% had sex with men while not incarcerated.

Awareness of Behaviors During Incarceration:

- 57% observed alcohol use and 73% had seen drug use (see Table 2).
- 16% observed men injecting drugs. 50% of these men reported that men used a homemade device or other non-standard needle/syringe equipment for injection purposes.
- 56% reported that consensual sex occurred in prison.
- 28% reported that forced sex occurred between incarcerated men.

Personal Experiences During Incarceration:

- Personal experiences with substance use and sexual activity during incarceration were lower than awareness of behaviors.
- 50% reported any substance use, 33% alcohol use specifically, and 42% drug use (e.g., pot, sedatives). Only 1 (0.5%) participant reported injection drug use.
- 17% of the men reported non-conjugal voluntary sex (oral, vaginal or anal). Two men who reported voluntary sex with men also reported being forced to have sex with another incarcerated male.
- 39% of the men who had consensual sex during incarceration reported (any) condom use, and 12% reported using saran wrap, a rubber glove, plastic bag, or other means of protection (data not shown).
- Variables associated with substance use during incarceration included race/ethnicity (black men less likely as compared to white men), longer incarceration, and gang affiliation (see Table 3).
- Variables associated with consensual sex during incarceration included Site (men in Site A and Site B less likely as compared to men in Site C), and having male sexual partners while in the community.

Conclusions

- Sexual activity between incarcerated men and injection drug use do occur during confinement, however the prevalence of these behaviors is relatively low compared to reported rates of behaviors occurring in the community.
- Our findings suggest that HIV/STDs in this population is more likely the result of risk behaviors that occur in the community.
- Incarceration represents an opportunity to reach people at increased risk for HIV/STDs.
- Prevention efforts should address risks during incarceration, but greater attention should be paid to developing an incarcerated individual's ability to adopt safer practices following release.

Limitations

- These data are not generalizable to all incarcerated populations given varying lengths of incarceration, with a significant proportion of the sample having been incarcerated for two years or less. As a result, higher frequencies of reported substance use and sexual behavior during incarceration may be found in populations serving longer sentences. More research is needed in this area.

Table 1: Participant characteristics and behaviors occurring in the community^a. (N=197)

Variables	N (%)
Site	
Site A	36 (18%)
Site B	75 (38%)
Site C	86 (44%)
Age Group, years	
18-21	78 (40%)
22-25	95 (48%)
26-29	24 (12%)
Race/Ethnicity	
Black, non-Hispanic	90 (46%)
White, non-Hispanic	64 (32%)
Hispanic (any race)	20 (10%)
Other, non-Hispanic	23 (12%)
Education	
< High school/GED	83 (42%)
≥ High school/GED	113 (57%)
Length of incarceration(s), years	
2 years or less	88 (45%)
more than 2 years	106 (54%)
Multiple incarcerations	169 (86%)
Sexual partners	
No partners	1 (<1%)
Female only	185 (94%)
Male partner(s)	10 (5%)
Marijuana use	169 (86%)
Other drug use ^b	110 (56%)
Injection drug use	17 (9%)

^a Behaviors occurring in the community during a 9 month reporting period.

^b PCP, ecstasy, LSD, speed, crack cocaine, powder cocaine, heroin, speedball, sedatives

Table 2: Awareness of substance use and sexual activity during incarceration, and self-reported frequency of behaviors (N=197)

Variables	Aware of Behavior n (%)	Engaged in Behavior n (%)
Alcohol or drug use	153 (78%)	98 (50%)
Alcohol use	113 (57%)	65 (33%)
Drug use	144 (73%)	82 (42%)
Injection drug use	32 (16%)	1 (<1%)
Consensual sex (man or woman) ^a	135 (69%)	33 (17%)
Consensual sex with a woman ^a	111 (56%)	29 (15%)
Consensual sex with man ^a	111 (56%)	7 (4%)
Forced to have sex with a man	56 (28%)	2 (1%)

^a Sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) prohibited by the correctional facility (i.e. non-conjugal visits).

Table 3: Characteristics of men reporting any personal substance use or consensual sex with male or female partners during incarceration

Variables	Alcohol or Drug Use		Consensual Sex ^a	
	n (%) ^b	Final Model ^c	n (%) ^b	Final Model ^c
Total	98 (50%)		33 (17%)	
Demographics				
Site				
Site A	18 (50%)		2 (6%)	0.15 (0.03, 0.70)
Site B	36 (48%)		8 (11%)	0.26 (0.10, 0.67)
Site C	44 (51%)		23 (27%)	1
Age Group, years				
18-21	31 (40%)		12 (15%)	
22-25	50 (53%)		13 (14%)	
26-29	17 (71%)		8 (33%)	
Race/Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	41 (64%)	1	13 (20%)	
Black, non-Hispanic	37 (41%)	0.26 (0.12, 0.56)	15 (17%)	
Hispanic (any race)	9 (45%)	0.47 (0.16, 1.42)	3 (15%)	
Other, non-Hispanic	11 (48%)	0.71 (0.25, 2.00)	2 (9%)	
Education				
< High school/GED	34 (41%)		10 (12%)	
≥ High school/GED	64 (57%)		23 (20%)	
Incarcerated Characteristics				
Length of incarceration(s), years				
2 years or less	31 (35%)	1	6 (7%)	
more than 2 years	65 (61%)	2.47 (1.31, 4.69)	25 (24%)	
Alcohol or drug use				
No			10 (10%)	
Yes			23 (24%)	
Consensual sex ^a				
No	75 (46%)			
Yes	23 (70%)			
Gang affiliation				
No	58 (40%)	1	19 (13%)	
Yes	40 (77%)	6.49 (2.85, 14.82)	14 (27%)	
Behaviors in the Community^d				
Sexual partners				
Female only	92 (50%)		27 (15%)	1
Male partner(s)	5 (50%)		6 (60%)	11.46 (2.70, 48.64)
Drug use (excluding marijuana)				
No	36 (41%)		17 (20%)	
Yes	62 (56%)		16 (15%)	
Injection drug use				
No	87 (48%)		31 (17%)	
Yes	11 (65%)		2 (12%)	

^a Sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) prohibited by the correctional facility (i.e. non-conjugal visits).

^b Variables significant at the P<0.05 in univariate analyses are bolded in red font.

^c Variables significant in univariate analyses were entered into two separate multivariate logistic regression models (1) alcohol or drug use (2) consensual sex with a male or female partner(s).

^d Behaviors occurring in the community during a 9 month reporting period.

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For Additional Project START Information

- Oral Presentation
 - Session title: Preventing HIV spread in prisons
 - Session date: **2004-07-14**
 - Session time: 14:00 - 15:30
 - Location: Session Room B
 - Presentation time: 14:15
 - Abstract number: WeOrC1296
- Poster Presentation
 - Poster title: Project START: Sexually transmitted infections in men with a history of infection
 - Date for display: **2004-07-15**
 - Location: IMPACT Exhibition Center, Hall 3 - Track C
 - Abstract number: ThPeC7475
- Project START Web Site
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/projects/projectSTART>